

Using Project Work to Help Students Understand How Individual Roles Benefit

Cooperative Learning

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Action Research Report

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Abstract

This action research study was conducted in order to raise students' awareness about how individual roles benefit cooperative learning. The data collection instruments used were: a teacher journal, two writing tasks and a peer and self-assessment. The study revealed that students' commitment in the activities as well as the awareness about the importance in group working increased considerably through project work.

Key words: Project Work, Individual Roles, Cooperative Learning.

Description of the Context

The Institución Educativa Miraflores is located in Buenos Aires neighborhood in the east side of Medellín city; this institution influences neighborhoods of the commune 8 and 9. It is near to Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia, Institución Educativa Asamblea, a gas station and the Ayacucho's tram. It serves students of kindergarten, primary and secondary school from Buenos Aires, Caicedo, La Milagrosa, Pablo Escobar and some other neighborhoods close to the institution. It has two sessions; the secondary school is in the morning, from 6:15 a.m. to 12:15 a.m. and the primary school in the afternoon, from 12:30 to 5:30 p.m.

The school operates in what used to be a convent and antique church that has three floors, 19 classrooms, 3-computer classrooms, one science laboratory, one cafeteria, two bathrooms, one teachers' room, a library, one auditorium and an administrative room. The institution has a principal, 14 teachers for primary school and 23 teachers for secondary (3 of them are for secondary English classes), 3 English fellow teachers, 2 general coordinators and other administrative staff to attend to approximately 1500 students.

English is taught to primary and secondary school students. In primary school, English teachers are not major in English language. Given that, each grade only has a single teacher for all subjects and no one has a degree in languages. However, in Secondary School there are three English teachers and three English speakers that support the local teachers. Those fellow English Speakers were brought in for a national program called "English Teaching Fellowship Program" that was launched in January 2015 by the Juan Manuel Santos government and the minister of education Gina Parody. It consists of hiring foreign professionals with the purpose of improving the English education in Colombia considering this as an important and practical tool to interact in this globalized world and to exchange cultural aspects. Because of this program, the institution

had the need to increase the weekly number of hours taught in high school to four in order to take advantage of “Fellows” support.

The curriculum of the institution is under observation; the principal, the coordinators and some parents are updating it. They argue that the last curriculum is obsolete because the high school’s mission has changed since introducing the English Teaching Fellowship Program (ETFP). The administrative staff and teachers highlight the value of English in this institution since they consider it as a potential tool for success and develop the students’ lives. The syllabus used by the English teachers Expedición Currículo, is supported on the Common European Framework of Reference. The English syllabus is based on enduring questions; every term has an enduring question (what do you think about...?). However, it does not have any linguistic topic in order to answer the question. The syllabus’ standards are divided into five categories: listening, reading, writing, monologue and conversation. For example, the listening standard mentions: “Entiendo lo que me dicen el profesor y mis compañeros en interacciones cotidianas dentro del aula, sin necesidad de repetición” (Pedro, Journal entry 3, February 23-2016).

My cooperating teacher is from Colombia, she completed a degree in English and French at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, and a bachelor in educational psychology from Universidad de Antioquia. She has 20 years’ experience in teaching English in public high schools in Medellin. This year she is in charge of the students in the eighth and ninth grades.

This action research project is being developed in the 8³ grade, the class is composed by 22 boys and 14 girls between 13 and 15 years old. All students live very close to the institution and they belong to 2 and 3 socio-economical strata. The 8th grade’s classroom has a TV but no

internet connection or DVD player. It also has enough lamps and windows to provide the classroom with an appropriate illumination.

The English classes implemented by the cooperating teacher are closely related with the syllabus. Nevertheless, there is a particular and repetitive aspect to highlight. All English classes are always prepared and based on group work. The teacher does not plan classes that favor individual work. Even if students always have an active response to group activities, and when they work, they gain confidence, enjoyment, and they readily accept the comments or suggestions made by the teacher. In every English class, the cooperating teacher tries to speak and give the activity instructions in the target language in order to improve the students' skills. However, sometimes students do not feel comfortable and ask the teacher if it is possible to give the instruction in Spanish.

Statement of the Problem

Throughout the observations carried out in the first term of this year, I could notice how the cooperating teacher (CT) designs and bases her English classes in group work to improve students' relationship, critical thinking, and social skills. This type of interaction has promoted an active, cooperative, respectful and talkative students' behavior. Even though there are some students that are not very engaged to the activities proposed by the CT, apparently, they do not feel motivated toward the English class. This attitude can be observed in their lack of disposition when they are just walking around and talking among them. This can be evidenced in the following journal entries:

Most of the students are not interested in the activity; they are throwing papers and speaking among them (journal entry 2, February 16).

I noticed there are two groups of students in the two corners of the back, they are usually talking and playing among them (journal entry 2, February 17).

While some students were working, the CT was talking with some of them that were not interested in the activity (journal entry 3, February 23).

Even in some cases, there are some students that usually use their cell phones to take pictures of the activity done by a classmate, arguing that they are going to copy the activity at home. This attitude also shows their lack of interest toward the English class.

Two students were taking pictures about the activity done by their classmates in order to copy it at home due to they did not want to do the activity proposed by the teacher (journal entry 6, 2016)

The use of the foreign language in the classroom is not very common; the teacher uses the English just to explain the activities or give simple orders. Moreover, she usually has to repeat or ask a student to translate what she said to the class. Furthermore, students do not use the language at least to greet.

Taking into account these students' and class characteristics, there are two principal bearings that caught my attention. Firstly, my cooperating teacher is designing and implementing her English classes only based on cooperative work. It is expected that this interaction pattern favors students' collaboration and participation. However, some of them are not participating in the group activities proposed by the teacher since they are aware that even if they copy, they are going to get a good grade without participating.

Students have to copy on their notebooks a dialogue, an explanation about "how to describe" and do an exercise from a copy given by the cooperating teacher...some students are talking among them (journal entry 5, April 6)

Researcher: “Ustedes no deberían estar copiando eso” Students: “No él me lo presta y yo lo copio en la casa mejor” (Informal speech, April 6).

Secondly, I noticed that most of the activities proposed by the cooperating teacher are not connected among them; it means that there is not a logical plan in the classes design, every two or three classes she changes to another topic contained in the syllabus without making a coherent connection in order to contextualize the students. Furthermore, the syllabus designed by the institution does not have a clear content given that the terms are only based on an enduring question without specific topics that may guide the CT in order to answer the question.

Even if the enduring question and the topics worked in the English classes could be connected in a meaningful way, the CT does not plan the activities with a logical cohesion that involves those topics in order to answer the enduring question.

Taking into account the observations carried out in this specific group, I could notice the lack of coherence among the topics taught in the class, the lack of interest of some students who hardly show any comprehension about the importance of individual roles in group work. Thus, I consider that by using project work I could benefit the students' understanding concerning the importance of individual roles in group work. Project work is not only supporting group work but it is successful in developing personal skills of the individual learner as well; this includes development of self-recognition, responsibility and positive attitude to lifelong learning (Lípová, 2008). For this reason, I propose this **research question:**

To what extent can project work help eighth graders' understanding how individual roles benefit cooperative learning in Institución Educativa Miraflores?

Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this theoretical background is to guide and provide the readers with a clear idea about the topic worked in this project and previous works done related with it. First of all I will give a brief definition of project work and its 10 steps. Second, I will present how portfolios could be a very useful tool to support and assess this project work. Third, I will describe the advantages of implementing peer and self-assessment in order to support and assess the portfolios.

Project work is principally based on a set of activities that allow students to use their interests, abilities and desires. Also it let them to have an active role in the classes design. According to Caceres and Unigarro (2007), project work is a set of teaching strategies based on students' needs and interests that complements the teacher methodology, and can be part of the grade syllabus or the general curriculum. In project work, students participate all the time by choosing the main topic, developing and presenting it, sharing responsibility with the teacher and improving the teaching-learning process.

This approach was implemented in a public school in Bogota by Ruiz (2013) where the participants developed different investigations connected to topics they were interested in.

The project was conducted following the 10 steps. The group was divided in small groups and each one chose the main topic (environment care). Then, each group selected a subtopic: animal care, water care, plant care among others. Then, every group created a minibook supported and evaluated by the teacher and finally as a final step "celebration" each group share their projects to the whole group. With the implementation of this project, the main researcher pretended to enhance students' critical thinking skills and their writing process; improved their interactions with their classmates, students become more reflective and organized.

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According to Richards and Renandya (2002, cited by, Ruiz, 2013) project work is divided in 10 main steps with the purpose to make it manageable and get successful outcomes. They organized and named the steps in this way: 1- agree for a theme for the project, 2- determine the final outcome, 3- structure the project, 4- prepare students to the language demand of step 5, 5- gather information, 6- prepare students to the language demand step 7, 7- compile and analyze information, 8- prepare students to the language demand step 9 and 10- evaluate the project. They conclude project work as a suitable and meaningful approach to improve students' learning when teachers are creative.

Project work, being an approach that is principally based on cooperative work, provides multiple common benefits as much as individual like students' motivation, cooperation, personal and social responsibility (Ruiz, 2013). In addition, Lípová (2008) considers that project work is not only supporting group work but it is successful in developing personal skills of the individual learner as well; this includes development of self-recognition, responsibility and positive attitude to lifelong learning. Finally, Dam, Eriksson, Little and Miliander (1990, cited by, Martin & Cardenas, 2014) detailed two requirements: an active student participation in classroom learning and a meaningful learning environment in which students can interpret new information and incorporate it to what they already know.

Even if project work is a very complete method that provides teachers with meaningful tools in order to make the students active participants in the classes design, there are some challenges that could hamper a proper development of the project. According to Lípová (2008) there are some aspects to take into account like: noise, time, the use of mother tongue, mixed ability class, monitoring, personality and motivation problems.

Nonetheless, this project work will be supported with a portfolio. It is defined by O'Malley and Valdez (1996) as unique opportunity for students to learn to monitor their own progress and take responsibility for meeting goals jointly with the teacher. Thus, the main purpose of using portfolios is to give order and meaning to the project. Also, it will be designed in order to guide and help students in the process. O'Malley and Valdez (1996) highlighted that by using portfolios the students' performance is evaluated in relation to instructional goals, objectives, and classroom activities.

Despite the previous aspects that could interfere with the project, it is possible to tackle those obstacles by using peer and self-assessment in order to improve students' autonomy. Nicol and Macfarlane (2006) argue that one effective way to develop self-regulation in students is to provide them with opportunities to practice regulating aspects of their own learning and to reflect on that practice. In addition, they agree self-assessment tasks are an effective way of achieving this as well as encouraging reflection on learning progress.

Therefore, the main goal of this action research is to implement project work with the purpose to help students understand how individual roles benefit cooperative learning assessed through self and peer assessments in order to improve autonomy in eighth graders at I.E Miraflores.

Objectives

Main Objective

To improve the eighth graders' individual work through project work.

Specific Objectives

To design coherent and connected English lessons in order to make them understandable for the students.

To foster Students' interests according to the topics negotiated and developed in the project.

To use self and peer assessment to promote students awareness of the importance of individual work in cooperative learning.

Action Plan

Taking into account this coming third term, I will count on 4 hours class and the specific groups' needs I consider pertinent and appropriate to implement a project work. The most important reason is that project work embraces the main objective of this action research which is to improve the eighth grader's individual work through project work. According to Lípová (2008) project work is not only supporting group work but it is successful in developing personal skills of the individual learner as well. This includes development of self-recognition, responsibility and positive attitude to lifelong learning

According to Richards and Renandya (2002, cited by, Ruiz, 2013) project work is divided in 10 main steps with the purpose to make it manageable and get successful outcomes. Those are:

- In the first class, I am going to negotiate with the students about the possible topic which we are going to work in order to answer the enduring question of this term. (step 1)

- In the second class, I am going to negotiate with the students the final product or final presentation with this group. But with a survey that I carried out last month students suggested to do presentations or role plays and this could be the final outcome. (step 2)

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- The second week, I am going to explain students what are the steps and what the project consist of (step 3).

- The second and third weeks, depending on the topic chosen by the students, I am going to provide them with suitable vocabulary activities, grammar skills and teach them how to look for relevant information on internet. (step 4)

- The third and fourth weeks, I am going to provide students with a suitable sample about what they have to do; it means that I am going to develop my own project in order to show them how to do it (step 5).

- The fifth week, I will help students to build vocabulary and grammar structures according to the topics they selected. Also I am going to teach them how to classify relevant information and show them how I classify the relevant information to my personal project (step 6).

- During the sixth and seventh weeks, students are going to compile and classify the information they consider relevant to their project (step 7).

- On the eighth week, I am going to present my project to the class with the purpose to show them how to do it and what concepts they must take into account in the presentations (step 8)

- During the ninth week, students will present the final products to the class (step 9).

- On the tenth week, I am going to implement a competition due to in the survey's comments; students expressed the interest they have to design more English classes with competitions in order to take this suggestion. The questions for the competition will be designed by the groups; it means that each group is going to design some questions based on their presentation. I am going to evaluate the pertinence of the questions. The main objective of this

activity is to catch the students' attention in the project presentations and give the appropriate attention and respect to the work that their classmates are doing.

In order to raise students' awareness about the importance of individual performance and responsibility, I am going to support this project work with a portfolio. This portfolio will contain all the activities developed in the classes and the information they gather through the process. Each member of the group will have a specific role to develop and organize the activities included there.

This portfolio and the project will be evaluated through two peer and self-assessments. One of them will take place in the fifth week of the third term. The second one will be in the last week after the presentations. Those assessments will be supported with a rubric. Before implementing these evaluations, I am going to help students raise awareness about commitment they have with this important tool.

Development of Actions

Through a semester of observations in this 8th grade, this action research was conducted in order to increase the students' individual performance through collaborative work. Therefore, I implemented some teaching actions: project work and a portfolio, in order to improve the students' individual performance. In addition, I carried out three research actions: journals, writing tasks and peer and self-assessment, for the purpose of gathering, comparing and analyzing the possible outcomes of the project.

For the first teaching actions I conducted project work; the purpose of this project work was to improve the individual performance of students through collaborative work. According to Richards and Renandya(2002, cited by, Ruiz, 2013) project work is divided in 10 main steps to make it more manageable for the teacher and students. In order to make this project more

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understandable and easy for students, I decided to choose and do the same project of students with Barack Obama. The first step of the project was negotiation which consisted in choosing a topic that was connected to the enduring question proposed by the syllabus. For this third term the questions was “What do you think about?” Hence, students and I did a brainstorm to conduct the question, after this we voted the ideas they proposed; they chose as a topic of the project a famous character’s life. The second step was deciding the project final outcome which was selected through another voting; they agreed to have a final presentation as a celebration of the project. In the third step I explained the missing steps to students in order to be clear with the objectives and solve the students’ doubts about the project. Then, in the fourth step I prepared students with the appropriate language required by the topic they selected. In this case, they needed to know how to use simple present to describe a famous character. In the step fifth students did the first search of information about their famous character. In this research students had to look for personal information, physical appearance, values and family members about the famous character. In the seventh step, after carrying out the first research, students classified the information according to the example I provided to them; I brought to class the information about my famous character and I showed them what I had to take into account to classify the information. We classified the information in three main parts: general information, famous characters physical description and a relative description. After having provided the students with a proper feedback about their first research we passed to the next step. For the eighth step students created a poster about their famous character to be presented in class with the all the information worked in this term. In step ninth, in order to prepare students to the presentation, I presented Barack Obama my famous character description to illustrate them about how to do a

presentation and what concepts they had to take into account. At the end of the project step tenth, students presented their posters about their famous character to the class.

The second teaching action developed was the use of portfolio as an evaluative tool to support and guide the students' process. Each group had to have a portfolio which contained all the activities, worksheets and feedback developed in class. Considering, the information needed for the final presentation of the project would be taken from this portfolio.

In order to collect data the first research action was a journal that was carried out through all the English classes in order to document relevant information and repetitive patterns that could address my research question to important findings or reflections.

The second research action was the implementation of two writing tasks. The first one consisted in making a physical description and introduction about themselves and a classmate. This action was conducted the first week of the third term with the purpose to know the students' level at the beginning of the project. The second writing task was carried out in the last week of the term. It was about making a physical and general description of the famous character they were working in the third term. The purpose of those writing task was to know the students individual improvement in the project comparing the two writing tasks using a rubric which had categories; textual organization, linguistic and vocabulary.

As a final research action I conducted a peer and self-assessment at the end of the term in order to know the students' perceptions and feelings about the project. This assessment contained some open - ended questions about individual performance and collaborative work and some other open-ended questions in which students commented their perceptions about the project.

Findings and Interpretations

This action research study intended to raise students' awareness about how individual roles benefit cooperative learning through the implementation of project work. During the process of this research, three instruments were used to collect data. The first source was the journal I kept with observations and lesson reports from every class; the second instrument was the two students' writing tasks about descriptions of personal and famous character profiles; and the last one a peer and self-assessment rubric students used to evaluate their performance and involvement with the project. To analyze the data I took the following steps: first, I classified the information of the journals by categories, then; I designed a rubric to compare the linguistic performance of the two students' writing tasks, the first performed at the beginning and the second at the end of the project. Finally, I analyzed the results of the peer and self-assessment rubrics using a google form.

I triangulated the information through a general chart of recurrences designed to find out particular students' gains and challenges during the implementation of project. After reading and triangulating the data, three main themes appeared related with the project work implementation. These themes were: Students' engagement with project activities; Students' changes on individual performance, and; Students' awareness of the importance of cooperative work.

Students' Engagement with the Project Activities

At the beginning of the practicum, I could perceive that most of the students did not feel engaged toward the English classes proposed by the CT. This could be considering to most of the students were not learning because they were just copying the activities from their classmates when they usually worked in groups. With this in mind, I implemented a series of strategies like project work, portfolio and self and peer assessment in order to promote students' cooperative work while they gained awareness of the importance of individual roles when working in groups.

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However, students' lack of motivation was another concern that I wanted to address in my English class with the purpose to achieve the objectives devised at the beginning of the year.

“Again the students were working in groups. Even if some of them were just copying the activities made by their classmates” (Journal entry 6, April 2016, p. 2).

In the second semester the students' motivation was one of my imperative goals. Considering that the main purpose of this action research was to improve the students' individual performance, I implemented a project work in which students were active participants. Thus, increasing students' motivation was a fundamental issue that I needed to improve in order to make students aware about the importance of assuming those individual roles when working in groups.

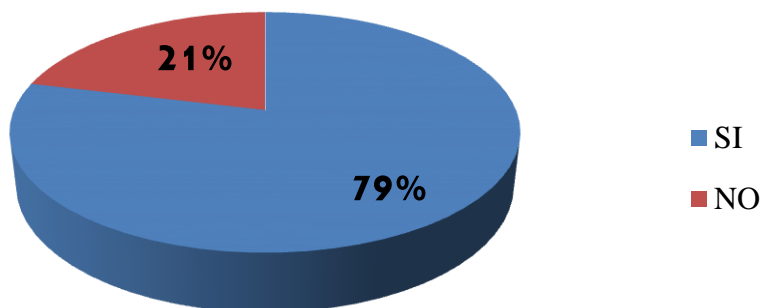
While developing project work tasks, students were really engaged with the activities proposed during the classes. They usually looked for clarification if they had any doubt; they had a great commitment and engagement with the project since they were usually providing ideas, participating and helping their classmates. Likewise, most of the students were focused on the individual role and responsibility they were assigned to complete the different tasks proposed in the project.

It was so motivating when I see the responsibility students had with the activity and they keep a high motivation with the project. Although there were two groups that did not bring the homework and tried to look for it in their cell phones. I could perceive how engaged they were regarding the project. (Journal 10, August 4 - 2016, p. 4)

Furthermore, students expressed how engaged they were working in the project work when they completed the peer and self-assessment task carried out at the end of the term. This

can be evidenced in this graphic that represents a high percentage of students that were engaged with the project work methodology.

Would you like to keep working with project work in the English classes?



Graph 1. Self-assessment.

Moreover, other students' attitude that was significant to show engagement with the project was the willingness they had when working with the tasks. During the first semester students took time to arrive early to the classroom therefore the CT had to call the students' attention several times in order to control the students' indiscipline. After we began developing the project tasks, students had a change in their attitudes, they started to arrive punctual to the English class and they organized faster to work on their tasks since they were aware about the duty they had to complete.

After calling the students' attendance they immediately started to work on their posters without any advice. In most of the classes they were very motivated working and helping each other. Even there were many students asking or looking for ideas or information for their posters. (Journal 11, August 23 - 2016, p. 4)

In sum, it is important to highlight how engaged and committed the students were in this project with their individual roles since most of them demonstrated a positive attitude to

accomplish the homework and the activities in class. Even if this was the first project that they conducted in the English class, the performance they had was satisfactory. Moreover, at the end of the project work, most of them expressed their acceptance and agreed to continue working with this methodology the coming terms.

Students' Individual Performance

At the beginning of the project the main objective of implementing project work was to increase the students' individual performance through group work. Due to most of the activities proposed in class were usually developed in groups, students understood this type of work just as a possibility to socialize with their classmates. Hence, they were used to play, talk and copy their peers without assuming the individual role required to work in groups.

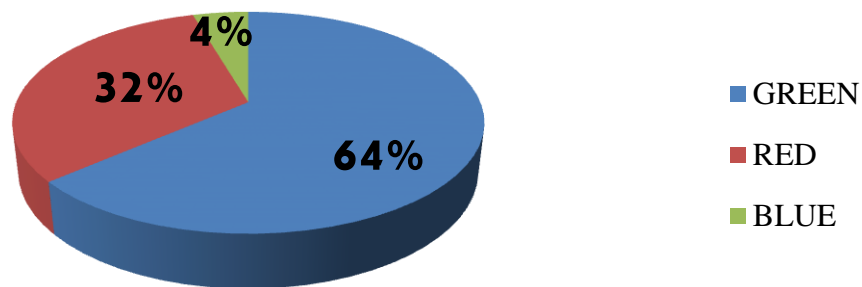
“Two students were taking pictures of the activity done by their classmates in order to copy it at home because they did not want to do the activity and they prefer to talk and play among them”(Journal 6, April 26 - 2016, p. 6).

Therefore, most of the students had a poor language performance and they were not usually engaged with the activities. In order to get better results, I decided to implement a project work in which students were active participants assuming different roles in their groups, according to the project activity as well as the design of them. It was so evident the positive responses that students had in every step of the project. For example, when the members of the groups had to present their final work-the description of the famous character they divided the different parts of the presentation.

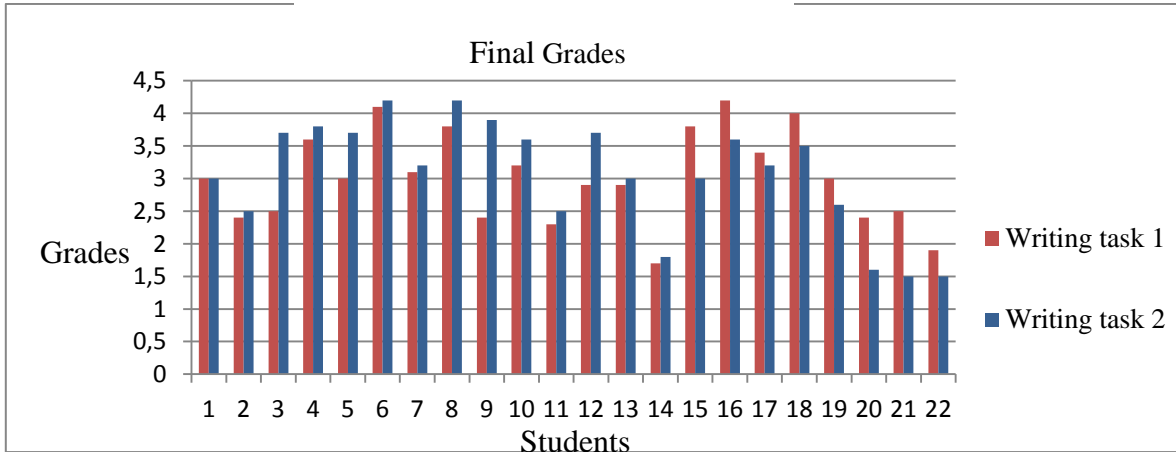
“The groups were organized classifying the information. Every student was really engaged working on their specific topic of the famous character: general description, physical description, clothes, physical and description of a relative” (Journal 10, August 4 - 2016, p. 5).

Moreover, in the two writing tasks carried out at the beginning of the project and at the end of this, it was meaningful to see how most of the students improved their English level in relation to the beginning of the project. The main linguistic aspects they improve were describing the physical appearance and building complete sentences to describe the character. In order to compare the two writing tasks I used a rubric which contains the linguistic aspects we worked through the year. The first two charts show two main students' gains when building complete sentences, the third one shows the general improvement that students had in the famous character description activity. After comparing the two tasks, it can be observed how the individual linguistic performance of most of the students was improved. (See appendix A "Rubric designed for evaluating the writing tasks").

BUILD COMPLETE SENTENCES TO DESCRIBE THE CHARACTER

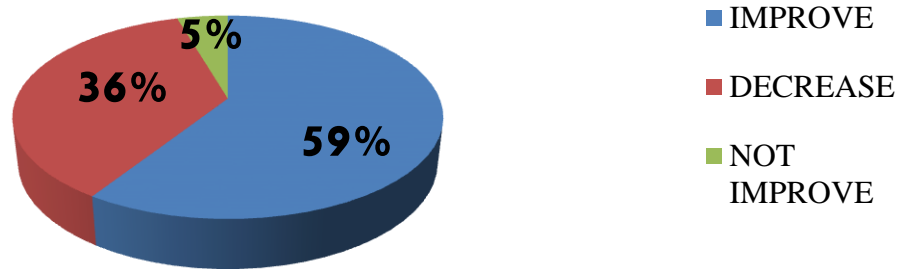


Graph2. Writing task rubric.



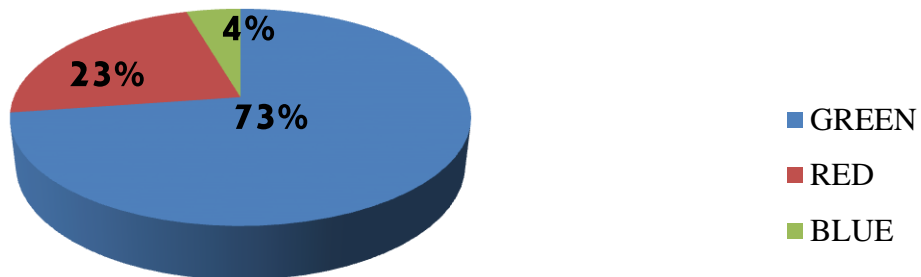
Graph 3. Writing task rubric.

STUDENTS' IMPROVEMENT IN FINAL GRADE OF WRITING TASK 1 AND 2



Graph 4. Writing task rubric.

DESCRIBE PHYSICAL APPEARANCE



Graph 5. Writing task rubric.

On the other hand, students expressed their thoughts and feelings toward the project work through a peer and self-assessment task carried out at end of the term. The students were asked about how they felt in the project; it was an open question where they could express themselves freely. Most of them mentioned how much they learnt in the project and how beneficial it was for their learning process.

“I felt good, I think it was a great project where we learnt a lot of things and new vocabulary” (Jonathan’s self-assessment, September 20-2016).

“I felt good, because I learnt a lot from my classmates and I improve my learning (...)” (Juan’s self-assessment, September 20 2016).

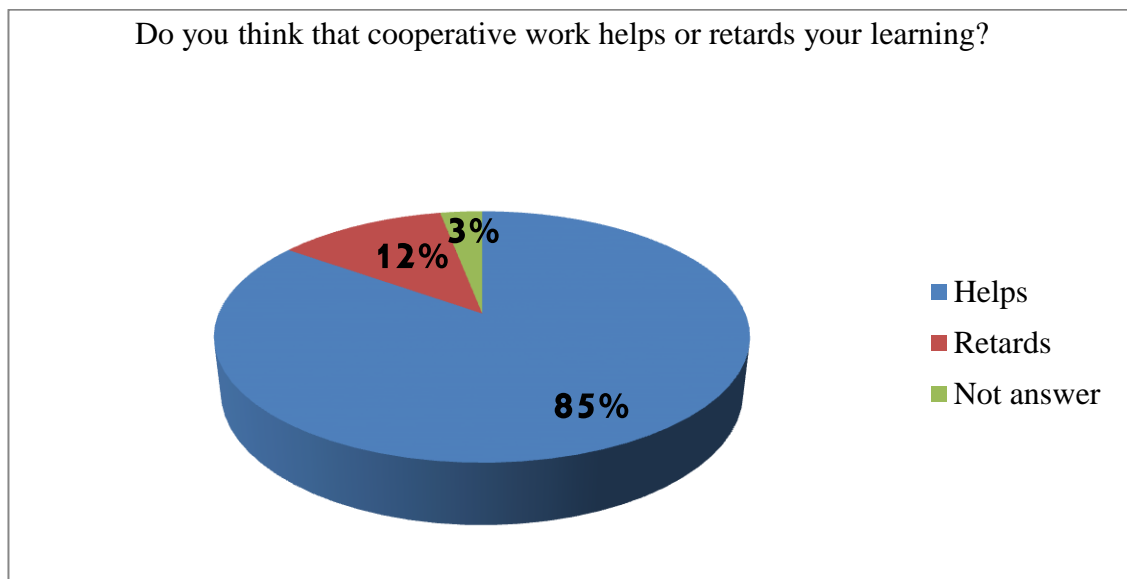
Cooperative Work

In the first two terms, when observing each class, it was so evident that most of students were copying the activities from their classmates; it means that the group work activities neither engaged students nor promoted cooperative work which is one of the main advantages of this methodology. Thus, in order to tackle this problem, I decided to implement project work with the purpose to increase the students’ cooperative work and raise awareness about the importance of assuming individual roles. With the implementation of this project students could learn how to work in groups since they were allowed to develop the different tasks of the project in a cooperative way, so it was so conspicuous to see students helping and supporting their classmates when they were wrong their attitudes regarding the group work changed completely they seemed to be aware about the importance and usefulness of cooperative.

Most of the classes I was passing through the groups giving feedback and some ideas. Students were very motivated, they were asking, looking for information

with their classmates and looking up for words in the dictionaries. I could see many students helping and correcting each other. (Journal 10, July 13 - 2016, p. 5)

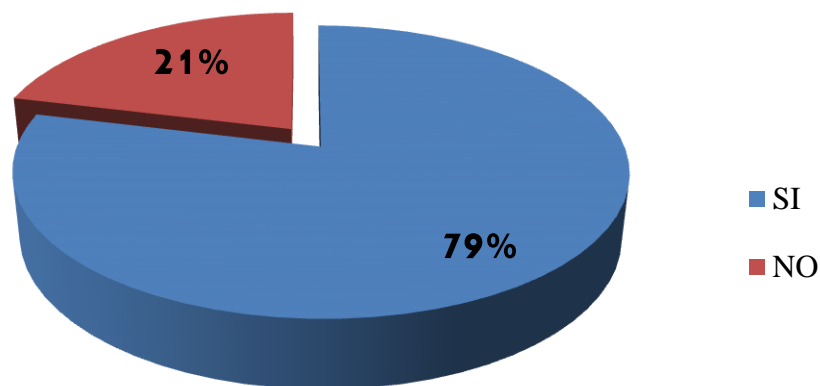
Apart from this, students expressed their opinions about the usefulness of cooperative work when promoting or retarding learning. In the peer and self-assessment tasks, with reference to the question 14, most of the students reaffirmed how cooperative work helped them improve their performance. The fact that students recognized the importance of cooperative work to improve their learning can be connected to the relevance they showed when assuming individual roles.



*Graph 6.*Self-assessment.

Most of the students were very engaged in the project to the point they expressed their interest to keep working with this methodology in the coming terms. This involvement with the project work methodology had a positive impact on students' linguistic performance, as it was evidenced in their final grades.

Would you like to work the next terms in the same way?



Graph 7. Self-assessment.

To sum up, the implementation of these actions allowed students become more aware of the importance of assuming an individual role in their respective groups. On the top of that, students achieved different goals. They were more engaged in the English class, they improved their punctuality, and were more participative in the activities: their responsibility with homework increased, and they seemed more concerned about their performance.

Conclusions

With the implementation of this project work, many conclusions emerged from this practicum which was focused on making students aware about the importance that individual roles have in the group working. Even if project work could be challenging for teachers, since it requires a lot of time to design the topics and keep the students' motivated in their individual roles. Issues that are so important to reach successful outcomes, it is worth to try this contemporaneous methodology in order to improve the students' performance in the English class as well as their responsibility. The most important goals that students achieved working by projects were the students' commitment increased with the individual roles they had in the

project; they started to participate more actively in the activities, they realized how important and useful is to help and be helped by their classmates and they were more responsible with their individual duties in the group. On the other hand, the students' engagement in the English classes increased considerably.

Reflection

The experience gathered in this action research as a teacher and main researcher in a public institution was not easy. Considering there are many aspects that make the teaching work difficult as it is the multiple interruptions I had in my English classes by the principal, coordinator, other teachers or even students. In most cases those pauses disturbed the students' attention therefore the activity designed for that specific class was not completed. Thus, I had to redesign some topics that were important for the project since there is not enough time to cover.

On top of that, it is difficult to work with a classroom with around 40 students that had different needs, feelings and likes and it is challenging to deal with all those students with an activity that engages them. However, with the implementation of this project work I could engage most of them in the activities designed by them and me, resulting more manageable this amount of students.

On the other hand, I realized that the students' participation in designing the class, was an important issue to take into account. Since, when they participated in the project design, they felt that the project was part of them and they comprehended that the English classes are designed for them. With this in mind and put into practice, the students' awareness about their individual roles in the class increased considerably: with the attendance, punctuality, participation, commitment with homework and helping their classmates.

In summary, with this action research I could achieve and learn many aspects that are just learnt through practice and experience like dealing with 40 students, manage the students discipline, call the students attention, among others. Moreover, the most important aspect this practicum generated was how useful it is being an active researcher in our English classes in order to improve them given that our English classes are not perfect and we as teachers must improve our teaching practices.

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AppendixA. Third term syllabus

Enduring question: What do you think about....?			
Actions	Objectives	Date	Data collection instrument
Implementing project work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To raise students' awareness about group work. -To provide students with tangible examples. -To teach students the importance of peer and self-assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Week 1: to negotiate project topics. Week 2: to explain the steps of the project. Week 3: to provide students with an example. Week 4: to look for information. Week 6: to classify information. Week 9: to prepare students for the presentations. Week 10: to present the final product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To provide students with rubrics designed by the researcher in order to assess themselves and their classmates. -To support the students' assessment with a teacher evaluation by using a rubric.
Using portfolios	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To guide students through the project work process. -To provide Students with feedback. -To help students to understand their individual roles in the project. 	During the whole term	Rubrics (peer and self-assessment)

Appendix B. General chart of recurrences

CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES	SOURCES						TOTAL	
		OBSERVATION JOURNALS				STUDENTS ARTIFACTS 22			SELF AND PEER ASSESSMENT 11 Questions 33 students
		1	2	3	4	1	2		
Students' perceptions about class	Expressing opinions and responses about the activities	1	1	1	2			24	29
	Students motivation about learning English	1	1						2
Teacher's classroom management on project work	Calling the students attention		1		2				3
	Classroom management "group work"	1							1
	Classroom management "individual work"	1		1	1				3
	Negotiation of the topic	2							2
	Talking about the topics concerning the class	6	2	1					9
	Providing feedback		1	3	4				8
	Answering questions	1	1		1				3
Students' attitudes in project work	Modeling the project			1	3				4
	Willingness in the project	6	3	10	6				25
Individual work	Doing different things	1	1	1	3				6
	Commitment with homework and tasks of the project	2	2	2	2				8
	Improvement				1		13	18	32
Collaborative work	Don't improvement						8		8
	Getting in groups	1							1
	Students' interaction	3	2	3	3			8	19
Collaborative work	Students supporting and helping their classmates	2	2	1	1			9	15

Appendix C. Writing task rubric

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Writing tasks rubric

Student's name:

Date:

Enduring Question Third term	What do you think about a famous character's life?	
Student is able to	GRADES	
	1 task	2 task
TEXTUAL ORGANIZATION (PARAGRAPHS)		
Mention General information of the character		
Describe Physical appearance		
Describe clothes of the character		
Describe Family member physical appearance		
Student is able to give an opinion about the famous character		
St is able to do complete description including all aspects proposed in different paragraphs		
LINGUISTIC TOPICS		
Use simple present to describe the character		
Use the appropriate adjective order (adj + noun)		
Build complete sentences to describe the character		
Vocabulary		
Use vocabulary concerning Clothes		
Use vocabulary concerning parts of the body		
Use values and qualities to describe the character		
Final score task 1:		
Final Score task 2:		
Comments:		